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AUTHOR Sollie, Ray; Lightsey, Mike
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ABSTRACT

The perceived occupational goal blocks of 614 employed young adults from five Southern States were examined in 1972 and compared with goal deflection data derived from the same sample in 1966. Respondents were asked to rate 10 goal block items on a 1 to 4 scale. These 10 items were ranked according to total scores and percents of possible high scores for each item. Utilizing 1966 data, perceived occupational goal block scores for three sample subsets (race, sex, and residence) were computed and then compared with scores of the total sample. In order to see how all respondents rated goal blocks by type and to see if the same relationship held for each of the subset samples, the 10 item list was grouped into three categories (Personal, Enabling, and Structural). Additionally, the relationship between perceived occupational goal blocks and occupational goal deflection (determined via comparison of 1966 and 1972 data) were examined. Findings indicated that perception of goal blocks varied for different groups and by goal types, and that no relationship existed between occupational goal deflection and perceived occupational goal blocks. Race appeared to be the most consistent differentiating factor, for blacks perceived Personal goal block items as critical, 75 percent perceiving their own intelligence as a negative factor in terms of desired occupation. (JC)

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Perceived Occupational Goal Blocks of Southern Youth*

Ray Sollie and Mike Lightsey
Department of Sociology and Rural Life
Mississippi State University



Introduction

In an earlier paper we dealt with occupational aspirations and early job attainment of a sample of Southern youth. (Sollie and Lightsey, 1974) Our focus in that paper was occupational goal deflection which we defined operationally as the difference between aspiration and attainment. Using occupational goal deflection (OGD) as our dependent variable, we analyzed it for 614 respondents classified by sex, race and residence. We found significant differences in OGD scores by race and sex, but residential differences appeared only when we used sex and race as test or control factors.

This paper continues our analysis of the same group of respondents. We view this effort as a contribution to the literature on occupational mobility in the sense that it meets one of the conditions set forth by Blau and Duncan (1967) for the study of occupational mobility. They state:

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To study what affects occupational mobility we must first decompose this concept into its constituent elements by examining how origins influence later achievements, and then proceed to investigate how several antecedent conditions interact in their effect on achievements.

We assume that one of the constituent elements of occupational mobility is occupational aspiration, and that occupational achievement is affected by the aspirants' perceptions of barriers or blocks to their aspirations.

The literature is rich with studies of status projections (occupational, educational, etc.) of American youth (Kuvlesky and Reynolds, 1970). These studies include both descriptive and analytical treatments of empirical data as well as theoretical discussions. (Kuvlesky and Bealer, 1967; Haller and Sewell, 1957; Burchinal, 1961; Strauss, 1964; Featherman, 1971; Rieger, 1972; Morris and Murphy, 1959) They have shown that both aspirations and attainment vary, and that differences in aspirations and attainment are associated with other differences such as race, sex, SES, IQ, etc.

Research Problem

In this paper we focus on a block of items in the questionnaire used for data collection during Phase I of the regional study of status projections of Southern youth. These items, 10 in number, were viewed by research project planners as goal blocks, i.e., factors, conditions, etc., that might act as barriers to the achievement of occupational aspirations.

The purpose of the paper is to report on our examination of respondents' rating of the 10 items as perceived goal blocks. Unlike an earlier

report by Cosby (1969) in which goal blocks were treated as components of "structural disparity, i.e., membership in any group which has relatively limited access to higher level positions in the occupational structure," we deal with goal blocks as perceived by our respondents. The 10 items viewed as factors that might act as goal blocks were:

Not enough money to go to technical school or college.
 The schools I have gone to
 Lack of parents' interest
 My race
 Don't want to move
 Good jobs are getting scarce in the U.S.
 Lack of good job opportunities in or near my community
 No technical school or college nearby
 Don't know enough about opportunities that exist
 Not smart enough

Respondents were asked, "How much do you think each of the following things will keep you from getting the job you desire?" Possible responses were: Not at all, Some, Much, Very much. Weights of 1, 2, 3 and 4, assigned to these responses, permitted quantitative treatment of the data.

Procedures

Source of data. Data for this report were collected at two points in time by researchers in five Southern states.* In 1966, tenth grade students in selected high schools in the participating states were interviewed.

*Although six states participated in the Regional Research Project, Louisiana did not collect data in 1966. Consequently, this report contains data for only 5 of the states - Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas.

In 1972, a stratified random sample of 1,228 young adults from among those youths interviewed in 1966 was located and reinterviewed.** Included in this report, however, are only 614 young adults, the loss of cases resulting from exclusion of those who indicated in 1972 that they were students and those who indicated that they were working only part-time. Our analysis is of those 614 individuals who stated that as of May 1, 1972, they were working full-time.

Analysis. In order to gain as much insight as possible into the phenomenon of perceived goal blockage, we first examined each item separately. We then treated the items as an index.

With the weighting of responses it was possible to determine theoretical ranges for each item. These ranges varied, however, because not all respondents answered all items. Theoretically, the range for each item would be from 614, indicating that all our respondents had perceived the item as no block to their occupational aspiration, to 2,456, indicating that they perceived the item as a very strong block.

Computations based on the assumption that all respondents answered all items would result in an index range of 6,140 to 24,560. The lower score would indicate that all respondents viewed all 10 items as no blocks to their aspirations; the higher score would indicate the opposite, i.e., that all respondents viewed all 10 items as strong blocks. Because all

** Because Mississippi entered the reinterview phase of the Project later than other states, a decision was made to recontact as many Mississippi respondents as possible in the limited time available. As a result, slightly more than 60 percent were recontacted.

respondents did not answer all items, we computed an average N and then theoretical ranges based on the average. This computation produced a possible low score of 5,810 and a possible high of 23,240.

Our sample, as a whole, scored 11,743 on the index. Converted to percentages, this meant that our sample scored 50.5 percent of the possible high score. On Table 1 we show the rank order of the 10 items with total scores and percents of possible high scores for each item.

Table 1. Rank Order of Perceived Goal Block Scores
for Total Sample

	<u>Goal Blocks</u>	<u>Total Score (N)</u>	<u>Percent of possible high score</u>
1.	No technical school or college nearby	2037(600)	84.9
2.	Don't know enough about the opportunities that exist	1489(587)	63.4
3.	Not smart enough	1275(575)	55.4
4.	My race	1199(579)	51.8
5.	Good jobs are getting scarce in the U.S.	1090(573)	47.6
6.	Lack of parents' interest	1044(581)	44.9
7.	Lack of good job opportu- nities in or near my commu- nity	1028(576)	44.6
8.	Don't want to move	926(582)	39.8
9.	The schools I have gone to	843(575)	36.6
10.	Not enough money to go to technical school or college	812(578)	35.5

Of the 600 respondents who responded to item 1 in Table 1, only 30 viewed it as no block to their occupational aspirations; only one-fourth of those responding to item 10 indicated that lack of money for educational purposes would act as a block.

With a sample composed of male and female, white and black students whose place of residence in 1966 was determinable, we were able to analyze perceived goal blocks of sample subsets. We found when we did this, however, that sex, race and residence did not affect perceived goal block scores. Table 2 contains data on perceived goal blocks for these subsets.

Table 2. Perceived Occupational Goal Block Scores of Sample Sub-sets.

SUB-SETS	INDEX RANGE	(N)	ACTUAL SCORE	PERCENT OF POSSIBLE HIGH SCORE
Race				
W	3480-13920	(348)	6622	47.6
B	2330- 9320	(233)	5121	54.9
Sex				
M	3800-15200	(380)	7581	49.9
F	2010- 8040	(201)	4162	51.8
Residence*				
SC	1280- 5120	(128)	2518	49.2
ST	1240- 4960	(124)	2418	48.8
RNF	1490- 5960	(149)	3044	51.1
RF	1800- 7200	(180)	3703	51.4

Our next analytical treatment of the data involved the grouping of the ten items into three categories labeled Personal, Enabling and Structural. Items classified as Personal are those pertaining to respondents' self-perception. Enabling items represent both motivating and enabling factors

*Residence was classified as follows: Small City (over 2500), Small Town (under 2500), Rural Nonfarm (in the country but not on a farm), Rural Farm (on a farm).

related to occupational mobility. Structural items pertain to features of the social structure.

The grouping of items and statistical data are shown in Table 3.

Scores displayed in Table 3 were used for computing z-scores in an attempt to discover associations between sample sub-sets and goal block types. The test used was the z-test for testing the significance of the difference between two proportions, using the .05 level of significance for two-tailed tests as the criterion for accepting or rejecting the null hypotheses. (Yeomans, 1968). Our findings were as follows:

1. Males and females did not differ significantly in their rating of Personal items as blocks to their desired occupations. The same was true for both Structural and Enabling items.
2. Blacks rated Personal items significantly higher than whites as blocks to their desired occupations, but they did not differ significantly from whites in their rating of Structural and Enabling items.
3. Residence had no effect on the rating of any of the types of items.

The effect of race on perception of occupational goal blocks classified as Personal may be viewed as a higher level of pessimism among black youth, reflecting their awareness of their disadvantaged position. On the other hand, when race as a perceived goal block was examined apart from other blocks, it was observed that more than half of our white respondents - 57.4 percent - saw their race as a negative factor in terms of achieving their desired occupations, i.e., 57.4 percent checked a response other than not at all. The comparable figure for blacks was 66.8 percent. The fact worth noting here is that some (indeed, any) whites

Table 3. Goal Block Types and Perceived Goal Block Scores*
of Total Sample and Sample Sub-sets

Goal Block Types	Total Sample	Sex		Race			Residence**		
		M	F	W	B	SC	ST	RNF	RF
<u>Personal</u> (Items 2, 3, 4 and 8 in Table 1)	52.6	51.2	55.3	48.8	58.6	50.4	53.2	53.2	53.2
<u>Enabling</u> (Items 6, 9 and 10 in Table 1)	38.9	39.1	38.5	35.9	43.4	36.1	38.1	40.8	39.9
<u>Structural</u> (Items 1, 5 and 7 in Table 1)	59.4	58.9	60.3	57.7	61.9	60.4	58.1	58.4	60.1

*Goal block scores were computed by dividing highest possible scores into actual scores.

**SC = Small City; ST = Small Town; RNF = Rural Nonfarm; RF = Rural Farm

perceived being white as a block to their desired occupations. A possible explanation is reflected in the oft-heard complaint that "if you're black, you've got it made," a complaint voiced by whites as a result of government action to provide blacks with better social, political and economic opportunities.

That all blacks did not share the feeling that they "had it made," however, is apparent when it is pointed out that two-thirds of our black respondents perceived their race as a block to achievement of their desired occupations.

We then compared scores of the three goal block types to ascertain whether our respondents perceived some goal block types as more critical than others. Our findings (.05 level of significance) were as follows:

For the sample as a whole, Structural items were perceived as the strongest blocks to desired occupations. They were rated significantly higher than Personal items which were perceived as the second strongest group of blocks.

Enabling items were perceived as significantly weaker than Structural and Personal items as blocks to desired occupations, being rated 26 percent lower than Structural and 34 percent lower than Personal items.

Our next operation was to examine goal block types according to sex, race and residence in order to ascertain whether the same relationship held for these three sub-sets. Our findings were as follows:

All sub-sets perceived Structural and Personal items as significantly stronger blocks to their desired occupations than Enabling items.

White respondents perceived Structural items as significantly stronger blocks than Personal items, but blacks did not.

Males perceived Structural items as significantly stronger blocks than Personal, but females did not.

When holding residence constant, it was observed that Structural items were rated as stronger blocks than Personal items by all residence types, but the difference was not statistically significant.*

Our final analytical treatment of the data focused on the relationship between perceived occupational goal blocks and occupational goal deflection, the latter concept having as its referent the difference between occupational aspiration as measured by the Duncan SEI in 1966 and occupational attainment as measured in 1972.

In the paper referred to earlier (Sollie and Lightsey, 1974), we examined occupational goal deflection of our respondents classified by sex, race and residence. This gave us sixteen different respondent types with occupational goal deflection scores ranging from a high of 62 to a low of -3. For each one of the sixteen classes established in the earlier paper, we computed perceived goal blockage scores and then tested the relationship between the two sets of scores with Spearman's rank order correlation. The test indicated that the two variables were unrelated.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the perceived occupational goal blocks of a sample of Southern youth. We have shown that perception of goal blocks varied for different groups and by goal block types. We also

*Calculated z-scores are affected by N and it should not be concluded that a numerical difference between two scores is significant in itself.

concluded from the result of a statistical test that no relationship existed between occupational goal deflection and perceived occupational goal blocks.

Throughout the analytical procedures in this paper and those of the earlier paper, race appeared as the most consistent differentiating factor. Although females experienced significantly less occupational goal deflection than males (as reported in the earlier paper by Sollie and Lightsey, 1974), their perceived goal block score was slightly but not significantly higher than that of males. In both reports, blacks differed significantly from whites, although not in every instance. Blacks perceived Personal goal block items as more critical than did whites. Specifically, more than three-fourths of our black respondents saw their intelligence as a negative factor in terms of desired occupation, but the comparable figure for whites was slightly less than 48 percent. Reluctance to move was perceived as a negative factor in relation to desired occupation by 50 percent of our black respondents but only 30 percent of the white respondents.

Scores for blacks in this and the previous paper suggest that being black still is a disadvantage (occupational goal deflection was significantly higher for blacks), and is recognized as such by blacks (Personal goal block items were rated significantly higher by blacks than by whites).

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